Telephone subscribers in Delhi

412. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:
DR. ABRAR AHMED:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether subscribers of mobile telephones run by private companies in Delhi are more than that of MTNL's landline connections;

(b) whether subscribers are surrendering landline telephones in a large number and switching over to mobile phones because of MTNL's poor and costly services; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir. As per the information provided by MTNL and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on behalf of the Cellular Mobile Operators, as on 30.06.2003, there were 21,72,789 land line telephones provided by MTNL, Delhi and 19,82,752 Cellular Mobile Telephone Service (CMTS) connections provided by three private companies in Delhi.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Primarily on account of recent reduction in tariff of mobile telephones, it is possible that some subscribers might have migrated from landline to mobile phones.

C.A.G. report on telephone system in rural areas

†413. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI LAJPAT RAI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has, in its recent report, criticized Government for unsatisfactory telephone system in the rural areas;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

(c) whether Government have taken any action for redressal of objections raised in the report; and

(d) if so, the details of the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Comptroller & Auditor General of India has in its recent report mentioned about unsatisfactory performance of MARR Village Public Telephones (VPTs).

(c) and (d) Decision has been taken to replace all the 200751 MARR VPTs in a phased manner by 2004-05. 54971 MARR VPTs have already been replaced upto 31.03.2003.

Privacy laws

414. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that cell phone location-services raise privacy concerns;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether there are any specific privacy laws in India through which phone data can be obtained by people not entitled to access; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (d) Sir, the Licences for providing Cellular Mobile Telephone Service (CMTS) in the country have been granted under section 4 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. The terms and conditions of the said licence adequately ensure the privacy of a CMTS subscriber and provide that only authorized Government agencies are permitted to monitor the telecommunication traffic.

Moreover under 'cell phone location services' being provided by some of the Service Providers at present, the location of the nearest